

THE COGNITIVE AND ETHICAL SCOPE OF “CONFUSION” IN BAUMGARTEN’S AESTHETICS

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1. Introduction

Baumgarten’s aesthetics as *scientia cognitionis sensitivae* had been traditionally seen as obsolete. Philosophers who focused on his aesthetics as *die Wissenschaft des Schönen*, criticised it by contending that beauty is not an objective property and thus it was impossible to elevate the standard of the judgment of beauty to the level of science (Kant AK3:B35, AK 5:304-305).¹ Although his attempt to reconcile the values of the sensory and the intellectual was occasionally appreciated (Cassirer 356), his attempt was considered to be unsuccessful as he adopted Leibnizian epistemology, which Croce called “intellectualism”, and saw the epistemic value of sensory perception despite it being non-epistemic.

However, recent commentary has paid more attention to the potential of Baumgarten’s aesthetics, especially from a hermeneutical point of view (Makkreel 65-75). Baumgarten’s postulation of the essence of human beings not only as *res cogitans* but also as *felix aestheticus* also offers a new interpretation of humanity from an anthropological point of view (Gross 404). Furthermore, *aisthetics* has identified Baumgarten as a key philosopher who provides a possible methodology to develop aesthetics beyond mere philosophy of arts or beauty (Kaiser) and explore the potential to liberate the idea of sensibility as a passive faculty of a spectator (Gross 413). Philological research has questioned the traditional view that Baumgarten saw beauty as an objective property and thus he

¹ Citations to Kant’s works are made using the pagination of the Academy edition (abbreviated as AK).

fell into intellectualism (Tsumami 30-59).² Recent commentary has thus discussed the potential of Baumgarten's aesthetics widely and intensively.

As part of the renewed interest in Baumgarten's aesthetics, this essay attempts to elucidate the genealogical and metaphysical grounds for Baumgarten's positive re-evaluation of the sensory. Initially the origin of his re-evaluation is clarified through a genealogical examination of the concept of "confusion" in Descartes' and Leibniz' epistemology. Secondly, the metaphysical grounds are examined through an analysis of the metaphysical basis used by Baumgarten to justify the value of "confused" perception. Ultimately, this essay aims to illuminate the cognitive and the ethical scope of "confusion" in Baumgarten's aesthetics.

2. The genealogical grounds

The first question is the genealogical grounds on which Baumgarten attempted to reconcile the sensory and the intellectual. When he defined aesthetics as a science of sensory cognition, it was to establish an independent philosophical discipline of "clear" but "confused" cognition (M §520, A §15).³ Gross has given an historical explanation of Baumgarten's re-evaluation of the sensory, attributing it to the tension existing at that time between German Pietism and Enlightenment rationalism; having grown up in the Pietist orphanage and learning Wolffian rationalism which was secretly taught in the school, Baumgarten was searching for a third way that could reconcile the two while recognising the limitations of each (405-408). In addition to Gross' insight, Baumgarten stated that sensory perception can be cognitive and therefore the method to attain truth by means of "clear-confused perception" has to be an object of philosophy (A §6). He also suggested that enhancement of sensory perception can be advantageous for the act of rational perception (A §9). These two beliefs motivated Baumgarten to attempt to reconcile rationalism and sensationalism by working on the science of sensory perception.

² Section five of Beiser's *Diotima's Children* also provides the detailed examination of Baumgarten's aesthetics. Although Beiser evaluates Baumgarten's attempt to free aesthetics from the hegemony of logic, he still criticised Baumgarten for remaining within the limitation of Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalism.

³ Abbreviations of Baumgarten's works are the following: *Metaphysics* as M, *Aesthetics* as A and *Reflections on Poetry* as R. His writings are designated by the section number.

With regard to the philosophical ground which this essay explores, it is possible to state that rationalists themselves had a tension within their doctrine. On one hand, rationalism developed a system of logical reasoning, whose results were demonstrable and indubitable. On the other hand, rationalism struggled with practical philosophy and psychology. In particular, when rationalists attempted to relate the concept of morality and experience of art to the principle of certitude, they were unsuccessful. Descartes is crucial to a consideration of this dilemma as his discussion of emotion led him to move away from his complete devaluation of sensory experience. Therefore, the genealogical examination necessitates a reconsideration of Descartes’ epistemology.

Descartes’ distinction between “distinctness” and “clarity” in his *Principles of Philosophy* (hereafter abbreviated as *Principles*) determined the rationalistic predilection for “clear and distinct perception” and its dismissal of “clear but indistinct perception” having epistemic values (AT VIII 21-22).⁴ “Clarity” of a perception consists of an ability to distinguish between one perception and another. A similar definition is also found in Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics*:

The perception whose notes are only sufficient for distinguishing it with the greatest difficulty from the one most different thing is minimally clear... The representation whose notes are merely insufficient for distinguishing it most easily from one maximally similar thing is minimally obscure. (§528)

At this point, both philosophers shared the idea of positing an experiential distinguishability to be the criterion of the concept of “clarity”. However, Descartes considered that “clarity” is necessary but insufficient for perception of truth; truth also needs “distinctness” which requires not only an experiential conviction but also difference and precision which is free from any pre-judgment of memory or imagination (*Principles* AT VIII 32-33). A perception is “clear and distinct” when it is articulable by means of intellectual reasoning in which each constituent of reasoning and the logical connection between them is independently “clear”. The “clear” but “indistinct” notion is characterised as “confused” or “obscure” and excluded from the method to obtain truth.

The meaning of “distinctness” in the Cartesian sense is further elucidated by Gaukroger, who contrasts Descartes’ deductive reasoning with the logical reasoning of earlier philosophers, especially, the categorical syllogism. In the categorical syllogism, one example can be

⁴ Citations to Descartes’ works are made using the pagination of the modern standard edition. This edition is designated by “AT” plus the volume and page number.

more informative than another even if both syllogisms are concluded in the *Barbara* mode. This is possible because the difference in conclusion is drawn not from the logical connection of premises itself but from the personal views which accept the validity of premises (Gaukroger 17). Gaukroger's analysis follows that Descartes' deductive reasoning suffices for the discovery of truths because it completely eliminates personal views and depends on the purely logical connection between what is perceived. His insight is vital to characterise the criterion of Descartes' concept of "distinctness". That is to say, Descartes separates logical persuasion from logical demonstration. Going back to Descartes' own remarks, syllogism is useful to develop the skill of disputation but unsuitable for the discovery of truth because syllogism leads to a mere probability (*Rules* AT X 362-366). Reliance on "things perceived distinctly" only enables us to discover the self-evident logical connection. He stated that "...all things are so interconnected that it is much easier to learn them all together than to study each in isolation" (*Rules* AT X 361). What is to be noted here is the "interconnection" between "things" (*res*), not between persons. Descartes considered that only in the virtue of the abandonment of personal arbitrariness does logic acquire demonstrability. The criterion of the concept of "distinctness" lies in "interconnection" in this precise sense. Accordingly, "confusion" is eliminated from the cognitive realm.

However, Descartes' exploration into passions took a different view. If his criterion of "distinctness" is strictly sustained, any passion cannot possess an epistemic value because emotional perception is only experientially articulable and thus "confused". Indeed, Descartes conceded that "emotions or passions of the soul" are "confused thoughts" because "the mind does not derive from itself alone but experiences as a result of something happening to the body with which it is closely conjoined" (*Principles* AT VIIIA 317). Passions lack an indubitable interrelationship between "things perceived", namely, "distinctness". Hence, no matter how strongly they are manifested, passions cannot be conceived as "clear-distinct perception". Nonetheless he deviated from this principle when he introduced the concept of "internal emotions" (*émotions intérieures*) which was thought to be incorporeal (*The Passions of the Soul* [hereafter *Passions*], AT XI 440-441). This exception appears when he referred to the feeling of joy which is evoked by experience of liberal arts and goodness. For example, he differentiated "intellectual joy" (*gaudium intellectuale*) from "animal joy" (*laetitia animalis*), so that he can claim the existence of human emotion which correlates with judgment of goodness (*Principles* AT VIIIA 317). The correlation between incorporeal emotion and morality is also alluded to in his

discussion of love; “[The sensual love] is nothing but a confused thought, aroused in the soul by some motion of the nerves, which makes it disposed to have the other, clearer thought which constitutes rational love” (“Descartes to Chanut, 1 February 1647” AT IV 602-603). Love is also divided here into the sensual and the rational in parallel with the contrast between “confused” and “clearer”. This view is compatible with his claim that human beings have “distinct” thoughts of what is to be loved or valued (*Principles* ATVIII 317). The certitude of moral judgment is thus raised up to the “distinct” level.

The concept of incorporeal emotion reappears in his discussion of the experience of arts:

(...) when we read of strange adventures in a book, or see them acted out on the stage, this sometimes arouses sadness in us, sometimes joy, or love, or hatred, and generally any of the passions, depending on the diversity of the objects which are presented to our imagination. But we also have pleasure in feeling them aroused in us, and this pleasure is an intellectual joy which may as readily originate in sadness as in any of the other passions. (*Passions* AT XI 441)

“Clear-confused perception” is again shown to acquire incorporeality in this remark. In addition to the pleasure evoked by goodness, the feeling of joy from an experience of arts has an independent value in contrast to other kinds of passions. The concept of incorporeal emotion helps to sustain the trilogy of “intellectuality”, “distinctness” and “true knowledge”. “Distinctness” in this context, however, is different from the “distinctness” which was developed in his epistemology elsewhere. As he admits himself that moral certainty is insufficient to be called absolute certainty (*Principles* AT VIIIA 328), it is still within the domain of probability, and in this sense it is still what is perceived “clearly” but “confusedly”.

Consequently, there is a tension in the Descartes’ argument about “clear-confused perception” when the issue of moral judgment and emotion in relation to works of art are brought to the fore of his philosophy. Elimination of probable perception and reliance on “clear-distinct perception” was a key of his epistemology, but his exploration of intellectual emotion is inclined towards the development of an independent epistemological domain in which the system operates with probability but still possesses high certitude. To give privilege to pleasure through liberal arts and goodness ran parallel to his separation of intellectual and animal joy. This suggests that both were thought to reflect the essence of humanity. In his consideration of human beings as rational animals, leaving aside intellect, a capacity of feeling pleasure

from goodness and arts was also regarded as the endowments given to human beings exclusively. Then, he prospected that there must exist a faculty of judgment which enables human joy. Here, the ethical and cognitive scope of human emotion is nascent. However, it is “confused” and thus it is incompatible with his strict dismissal of “confused” perception from its judgmental ability.

One of the philosophers who attempted to deal with the validity of “confused” perception with regard to morality and works of art was Leibniz. It has been pointed out that the essence of Leibniz’ attempt lies in taking the concept of “confusion” and seeing it as being fused into togetherness (Beiser 39). This was done through the introduction of the concept of “marks” (*marques*): the definitive constituents of a perception. Leibniz contended that “distinct” perception requires a distinguishability of all “marks” (*Discourse on Metaphysics* [hereafter *Metaphysics*] G IV 449).⁵ If knowledge lacks an ability to be differentiated by “marks”, such knowledge was called “confused”.⁶ “Confused” perception is “clear”, as far as it is possible to distinguish one perception from another through sensory experience as a whole. This classification stimulated Baumgarten to explore the concept of “confusion” further. Baumgarten divided “clarity” into two kinds; “intensive clarity” which is “distinct” and “extensive clarity” which is “confused”:

When in representation A more is represented than in B, C, D, and so on, but all are confused, A will be said to be **extensively clearer** than the rest. We have had to add this restriction so that we may distinguish these degrees of clarity from those, already sufficiently understood, which, through a discrimination of characteristics, plumb the depths of cognition and render one representation *intensively clearer* than another. (R §16)

This passage succinctly shows that “extensive clarity” depends on the number of “marks” which constructs a single representation.

While Baumgarten characterized poetry as extensively clear representation, Leibniz also positively re-evaluated the value of “confusion” in the famous issue of “I don’t know what” (*je ne sais quoi*)

⁵ Citations to Leibniz’s works are made using the pagination of *Die Philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*. This edition is designated by “G”, plus the volume and the page number. In terms of the works which do not appear in this version, I referred to *Leibniz Philosophical Writings* (abbreviated as LPW). Except the citations from LPW, English translations from *Leibniz Philosophical Papers and Letters* are used.

⁶ *Ibid.* Also see Leibniz, “Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas” (hereafter abbreviated as “Meditations”), G IV 422.

in the judgment of works of art. He stated that “...we sometimes see painters and other artists correctly judge what has been done well or done badly; yet they are often unable to give a reason for their judgment but tell the inquirer that the work which displeases them lacks ‘something, I know not what’” (“Meditations” G IV 423). The ground of the judgment of art is never “distinct” because judgment is made only sensorily. Nonetheless, he admits that such judgment has epistemic value, as a work of art is an example of perfection in the “confused” realm. Although “confused” knowledge was separated from “necessary truth”, it was still regarded as “contingent truth” (“Necessary and Contingent Truths” LPW 96-105).

This positive re-evaluation of “clear-confused perception” derives from Leibniz’ theory of ‘the harmony pre-established’ (*harmonie préétablie*):

The soul follows its own laws, and the body its own likewise, and they accord by virtue of the harmony pre-established among all substances, since they are all representations of one and the same universe. (*The Monadology* G VI 620)

The multiplicity of things was explained as different perspectives of a single universe and accordingly the reason for “confusion” was attributed to the complexity of this “unity in multiplicity”. It follows that not only our intellect can discover the order in this universe, any entity, including our body, but also embodies the order. He articulated this idea in relation to “clear-confused perception” and stated that “...our confused sensations result from a really infinite variety of perceptions” (*Metaphysics* G IV 459). Furthermore, the unity in multiplicity in the realm of “confused” perception is related with the concept of perfection; “Each soul knows the infinite, knows everything, but confusedly” (*Principles of Nature and of Grace, Founded on Reason* G VI 604).

According to Leibniz, the role of a rational mind is to reflect on the experience and explicate its reasoning. Due to its inability to self-reflect, a faculty that perceives things “clearly” but “confusedly” is called a lower cognitive faculty. In this context, he proposed the hierarchy of knowledge.⁷ However, since what is cognized by the lower faculties is shared by the higher faculties, there is a legitimate bridge between the “clear-confused” realm and the “distinct” realm. In other words, what is cognized by “clear-confused perception” can be recognized by the “distinct” mind. In this way, although Leibniz did not completely

⁷ On this issue see “New Essays on The Human Understanding (c.1704)”, LPW 150-151.

consider the independent value of “confusion”, the devaluation of “confused” perception is invalidated. He conceded that even a “confused” perception can possess an epistemic value. Here, mere sensory perception converts into sensory cognition.

The reason why Leibniz developed such a teleological principle is related to Leibniz’ theology. Descartes considered that human beings and God do not share knowledge together; what we know is determined by God’s will, but we cannot know what God knows. This follows that there remains a possibility of truth which can never be thinkable even ideally. What he called “object” (*obiectum*) is nothing but a human idea of object.⁸ Consequently the substance of an object is an idea of substance within the realm of human intellectual thinking. In this way, Descartes placed the object itself outside the human understanding and opened a possibility of an unseen system of knowledge beyond the intelligible “objective reality”. By contrast Leibniz saw God as omniscient, and that human knowledge and God’s knowledge are univocal (*Metaphysics* G IV 428). If what is known by human beings is equal to God’s knowledge, a possibility of another intelligible system of knowledge outside human intelligibility disappears.⁹ Furthermore, if God is defined as being perfect and infinite, his knowledge also has to have no possibility of otherness.¹⁰ Consequently Leibniz’s concept of God eliminates what Descartes implicitly suggested, that is, a possibility of unintelligible otherness. Since all knowledge is within the unity which God ordains, human knowledge of truth also must fall within the unity of the system of God’s knowledge. This view of human knowledge therefore requires every existence to be subordinated to the united order. What is vital is that this promoted the re-configuration of the locus of interconnection between objects, or *ratio*.¹¹ For Descartes, rationality of an idea was determined by whether human beings perceive the interconnection between representations themselves. The interconnection is intellectually discovered by human beings, not derived from elsewhere. On the other hand, for Leibniz, rationality is not only within the realm of human ideas but also within the law which governs the whole universe. Since there is only one law which determines everything in this universe, the whole of this universe itself is the only possibility. Even if human beings cannot

⁸ See Descartes, “Author’s Replies to the First Set of Objections”, AT VII 102.

⁹ Leibniz suggests this view in his “Resume of Metaphysics”, LPW 147.

¹⁰ For his definition of God see “The Philosophical Note on February 11, 1676”, LPW 158.

¹¹ For his discussion of *ratio* see “The Metaphysical Foundations of Mathematics” LPW 670.

comprehend the law as perfectly as God, the law still exists everywhere regardless of human awareness. On this basis, positive re-evaluation of the “confused” realm can be understood. Even if a perception turns out to be “confused”, rationality should still be there. Although this violates the principle of absolute necessity in Descartes’ methodology, it is not problematic for Leibniz. This is because everything is pre-determined by the universal law regardless of what is to be perceived or how things are perceived.

Seeking the cognitive value in “confused” perception was implicitly nascent in Descartes’ discussion of emotion and was explicitly developed in Leibniz’ epistemology. Both philosophers, despite their differences, saw the necessity of a positive re-evaluation of “confusion” regarding moral feeling or experience of art. Behind this motivation, there was a consciousness that morality and art are the hallmarks of humanity as rational beings and thus have special values in their certainty, even if experience of them is not in the realm of “distinctness”. That is to say, admitting the certainty of “confusion” accorded with their attempt to acquire immutable and infinite value in the cognitive and ethical aspect of “confusion”. This genealogical background constituted the bedrock of Baumgarten’s aesthetics.

3. The metaphysical grounds

The second task of this essay is to explain the metaphysical grounds for Baumgarten’s formulation of the cognitive and ethical value in “confusion”. This requires a close examination of his concept of aesthetics and the way it changed over the course of his writings.

Baumgarten first postulated the cognitive value of “confusion” in his *Reflections on Poetry* in which the term “aesthetics” was coined. This dissertation proposed the conditions for poetry defined by Baumgarten as “perfect sensate discourses” (R §7), namely, “aesthetic” discourses. Due to the influence of Leibniz, perfection was attributed to the modality of “confusion”, that is the harmonized unity of marks. Baumgarten then considered that if more marks are gathered together into one perception, such perception is “extensively clearer” (*extensive clarior*) (R §16). Perfection of the sensate discourses thus depends on the magnitude of “extensive clarity” (R §§17-18). If each word in a poem owns “extensive clarity” in itself and the combination of those words also possesses “extensive clarity” as a whole, the magnitude of “extensive clarity” increases and produces “vividness” as a sensate effect (R §112). Here “extensive clarity”, as the modality of “confusion”, with “vividness”, as the entailed effect, constitutes the conditions for poetry itself.

Poetry does not offer conceptual knowledge precisely because of the status of “confusion” but, nonetheless, Baumgarten contended that poetry could possess epistemic values. In *Reflections of Poetry* he did not discuss this point in detail, but it is possible to argue that poetic knowledge was thought to be both of the knowledge of the particular and of “the sign” (*signum*). His concept of sign may be traced to a definition provided in §347 of his *Metaphysics*, where he defined the sign as “the principle of knowing the signified”. In order to clarify this aspect, it is useful to look at the examples of poetic representations Baumgarten raised in *Reflections of Poetry*. He stated that a description of a species is “extensively clearer” than that of a genus (R §20). Accordingly, a description of an individual is “extensively clearest” because it is “determined in every respect” (R §19). His claim is adequate considering that a species requires more determiners to define it than a genus, let alone an individual (R §18). Taking the condition of “extensive clarity” into account, determiners of an individual have to be perceived as unified. In other words, an individual has to be perceived as being composed of determiners which are not irresolvable because they are “confused”. Consequently, aesthetic knowledge, if any, can be the knowledge of the particular: borrowing his terms from his *Metaphysics*, the knowledge of a completely determined being, or the “singular”.¹² In addition, poetry provides the knowledge of “the sign”. Baumgarten succinctly claimed that a poem consists of “... (1) sensate representations, (2) their interrelationships (2) words as their signs” (R§10). It is crucial to regard words as signs not as concepts. The metaphor which he raised as an example of poetic representations illustrates this argument. Consider the following metaphor: “This person is a lion in battle”. Since “to be a lion” is not a quality of “the person” in its literal sense, “to be a lion” is what Baumgarten called “non-proper” (*improprius*) and “more abundant” (*crebrior*) description (R §79, §83). Nonetheless, it is possible to assume that there is a similarity between “the person” and “a lion”. The structure of similarity is “confused” not “distinct” because there is no interconnection between objective realities. It relies on our views to see their similarity. In other words, it needs the power to unite two unrelated things (R §65).

Now it is possible to explore the account of the knowledge of the particular and “the sign” (R §10) in aesthetics by means of this idea of the power of unification. This is related to the interconnection in poetry which Baumgarten postulated as the second component of a poem. It is

¹² M §148: “...a being is either completely determined or not (§10). The former is SINGULAR (an individual), and the latter is UNIVERSAL...”

argued that such an aesthetic nexus exists in the particular and the sign, and is perceived by the judgment of the senses. Baumgarten noted that “...the interconnection [*nexus*] of poetic representations must contribute to sensate cognition. Therefore, it must be poetic. *Such is the power of order and connection*” (R §65).

As has been discussed above, the interconnection between objective realities was regarded as the criterion of intellectual judgment since Descartes. The quoted passage also used the same term, but the meanings are qualitatively different. The interconnection of a poem signifies the inner connection of determiners which an individual or a “sign” holds within. The contrast between the logical nexus and the aesthetic nexus is further clarified in his discussion of abstraction in *Metaphysics*. He stated “I AM ATTENTIVE to that which I perceive more clearly than other things” and then “I ABSTRACT away that which I perceive more obscurely than other things” (M §529). That is to say, abstraction is distillation of “distinct” perception from thoughts in general in order to acquire universal and objective knowledge, although Descartes separated objective reality from object itself. In Kant’s commentary on this passage from *Metaphysics*, he also said that the abstraction of that which were perceived more “clearly” from those things which were perceived “obscurely” distinguishes the objective from the subjective.¹³ By contrast, aesthetic nexus signifies manifold connections in the particular, which cannot be abstracted. Such interconnection is not depicted as a reflection of static unity, but as an active power of unification. This connection is called “nexus” and is peculiar to the locus of “the aesthetic”.

The judgment of the senses is introduced as a faculty to identify such aesthetic nexus, being independent of the judgment of the intellect (R §92). Baumgarten claimed:

The judgment of the ear is either positive or negative, the positive judgment produces pleasure, the negative displeasure; since a confused representation determines both, it is sensate, and poetic. It is poetic to excite either displeasure or pleasure in the ear. (R §93)

What is vital here is that judgment of the senses “produces” (*procreeo*) pleasure. In other words, judgment precedes sensate pleasure. Baumgarten not only accepted the involvement of judgment in “confused” perception but also posited it to be the source of aesthetic truth, preceding self-awareness of it through sensate pleasure. Unlike intellectual judgment, aesthetic judgment is pre-conscious. Its existence is only suggested by an experience of pleasure, namely a result of an

¹³ See Baumgarten’s note, *Metaphysics*, p. 203.

experience of aesthetic representation. It is noteworthy that Baumgarten did not state that pleasure determines judgment. Rather, pleasure discloses the existence of judgment. Pleasure is based on the cognitive judgment of aesthetic truth. Once it finds the nexus, it produces pleasure, namely, a feeling of “vividness”. It is noteworthy that the aesthetic is not determined by accumulation and generalisation of pleasing objects. Pleasure is regarded as the after-effect of the judgment. Later, Kant distinguished the judgment of the senses from the judgment of taste; the former concerns the agreeableness of the sensation and the latter concerns beauty as the effect of the free play of faculties (AK 5: 205-207, 239-243). Through this separation he distinguished the private judgment of the objects, which are pleasurable, from the universal judgment of beauty (AK 5:209-213). In the case of Baumgarten, these two judgments are not separated. However Baumgarten noted that the judgment of the senses is not identical to the judgement of taste inasmuch as the term “taste” may imply more than “confused” judgment (R §92). Through his persistence in the use of the term “senses”, Baumgarten attempted to validate the independence of sensory judgment. Unlike Kant, Baumgarten did not pursue the universality of the content of “the aesthetic”. If the particular is taken as an individual entity made up of internal determiners as a whole but the determiners cannot be completely identified externally,¹⁴ Baumgarten’s interest lay in how each entity can attain the realm of “the aesthetic” without an exclusion of any determiner.¹⁵

The cognitive scope of “confusion” in aesthetic perception is further elucidated in Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics*. It was published between 1739 and 1779, which includes four editions within his lifetime and three posthumous editions. Revisions made during the period between 1739 and 1750 are especially important as it is the time when Baumgarten was developing *Aesthetics* which would be published in 1750/58.

Throughout all editions *Metaphysics* locates aesthetics in psychology as “the science of the general predicates of the soul”, namely, metaphysics of the soul and its experience (M §501). Psychology is divided into empirical and rational, and aesthetics belongs to the former. To use Baumgarten’s phrase, empirical psychology deals with “my soul” (*anima mea*) whereas rational psychology treats the “human soul” (*anima*

¹⁴ M §152: “Singular beings are internally entirely determined (§148), and hence are actual (§54).”

¹⁵ This point is succinctly made in §560 of his *Aesthetics*: “Quid enim est abstractio, si iactura non est?” His view that abstraction is a loss has been seen as a crucial marker in order to argue the independent value of aesthetic cognition. See Gross 409 and Barnouw 37.

humana) (M §505, §740).¹⁶ This contrast reflects the manner in which empirical psychology is envisaged as metaphysics of particularity and subjectivity in sensory perception, while rational psychology is envisaged as metaphysics of universality and objectivity in logical reasoning. Based on this framework, aesthetics is defined as “...the science of sensitive knowing and presenting (*proponendi*) with regard to the senses” (M §533). This definition of aesthetics is consistently maintained in his systematic metaphysics throughout all the editions.

While the definition of aesthetics was constant, its supplementary explanation by Baumgarten varied in relation to the emphasis given to its constituent elements. In the first edition, aesthetics as a science of sensory cognition is discussed in relation to rhetoric and poetics (M §533).¹⁷ The parallel between poetics and aesthetics reflects the view developed in his *Reflections on Poetry* in which poetics corresponds to the explication of conditions for aesthetic representation. In other words, poetics is conceived as one of the genres as well as the most prime genre of aesthetics (R §40, §115). In this context, theoretical aesthetics is to be followed by the practical philosophy of liberal arts which provides *a priori* principles to create or appreciate good works of art.

In the second edition however, Baumgarten excluded reference to rhetoric and poetics. He claimed that aesthetics deals with “the logic of the inferior cognitive faculty” (M §533), namely, the faculty of “clear-confused perception”. Instead of the parallel between poetics and aesthetics, the contrast between “clear-confused perception” and “clear-distinct perception” became more conspicuous. Since this change was maintained in future editions, it was not a trivial change. Therefore the following question arises: what does this change imply?

Considering that this revision was done in the transitional period from *Metaphysics* to *Aesthetics*, the exclusion of the reference to poetry would be influenced by his expansion of the conception of “art” (*ars*). In his *Reflections on Poetry*, only poetry and pictures were referred to as genres of art. However in *Aesthetics* Baumgarten used engravings and music as well as poetry and pictures as examples of art, expanding the object of aesthetics from poetry to liberal arts in general. A more critical point is that he added the art of thinking itself as the object of aesthetics. The word “art” has a double meaning: arts as fine arts or liberal arts and

¹⁶ “The soul” is understood by Baumgarten as the source of “thought” (*cogitatio*). “Thought” designates consciousness itself, which occurs in the mind prior to being differentiated into sensory feeling or intellectual thinking. “Representation” is some manifestation of its existence, which supraliminal consciousness entails.

¹⁷ Also see the note 24, *ibid.*, p. 433.

art as technique or practice. His additional comment shows that he included art as technique in his definition of aesthetics. At this point, aesthetics was stretched from philosophy of works of art to philosophy of living in general. The fourth and posthumous editions include a German supplement by Meier. In the supplement, aesthetics is explained as *die Wissenschaft des Schönen* (M §533). This understanding of aesthetics was criticised by later philosophers who claimed that there are neither *a priori* principles of beauty nor objective rules of beauty. The concept of “beauty” (*pulcritudo*) was first discussed in *Metaphysics* (M §662) and finally brought to the fore in *Aesthetics*. In this sense, the supplement is adequate but it is also noted that in the original and Baumgarten’s revisions of *Metaphysics* and in his *Aesthetics*, this definition did not appear. In fact, the definition of beauty in Baumgarten’s aesthetics requires a close examination of his *Aesthetics*.

Beauty was defined as perfection of sensory cognition in §14 of *Aesthetics*; “Aesthetices finis est perfectio cognitionis sensitivae, qualis, §.1. Haec autem est pulcritudo...” The choice of the term “sensory cognition” rather than poetry or other genres of works of art is crucial. As the revised definition of aesthetics in the second edition of *Metaphysics* suggests, Baumgarten’s primary interest lay in the art of thinking which can produce aesthetic cognition, namely, beauty. The role of aesthetics is not to determine *a priori* principles of “beauty” as an abstract concept. Rather, beauty as the object of aesthetics is sought as a result of the completion of the enhancement of human sensibility.

This expansion of the scope of aesthetics accorded with his partial re-configuration of the Leibnizian principle of “unity in multiplicity” and with his growing interest in the similarity between human sensibility and human rationality. In terms of the re-configuration of the concept of “unity in multiplicity”, it is useful to pay attention to Baumgarten’s concept of “representation” (*repraesentatio*). Although his use of the term “perception” (*perceptio*) and that of “representation” is generally interchangeable, the term “representation” was preferred throughout the development of his aesthetics. Aesthetic representation is defined as the “thought” (*cogitatio*) produced by the power of “my soul” (M §§506-507). “My soul” is differentiated by Baumgarten from the “human soul”, which he envisaged as the source of rationality – the universal order which all human beings share (M §740). Representation concerning “my mind” is considered to be a manifestation of the individually subjective power. Taking “representation” as such, “sense representations” involve immediate and mutable perception via individual subjectivity. To put it the other way around, it promises neither sequential nor stable recognition. Rather it signifies not only contingent but also non-universal

cognition. The view that aesthetic representation is not a property of an object is related to his interpretation of beauty. He argued that beauty pertains to “phenomena” (*phaenomena*), which are defined as “confusedly” observable cognition, and emphasised that aesthetic phenomena should not be understood as an object or material but should be understood as “things” (*res*) which are represented in a mind.¹⁸ Aesthetic representation does not equate to the characteristics of an object. Emergence of aesthetic perception is inevitably involved with a subject as the creator of representation. The quality Baumgarten emphasised was neither objective nor subjective, but relational, what he called “representational truth” (*veritas repraesentationis*) (A §427).

Consequently he accepted the subjectivity as the essential source of aesthetic cognition. Aesthetic truth is not defined by authority or tradition, it is determined by how things are perceived. In other words, the mode of perception itself determines aesthetic truth. To accept an individual capacity to judge truth is an inheritance from Cartesian egalitarian revolution: truth is determined depending on how things are perceived by subjects and thus every human being who is able to perceive can legitimately discover truth. However in addition to the Cartesian concept of the substance of human beings, namely, incorporeal “*res cogitans*”, Baumgarten regarded sensibility as the other part of the essence of humanity. Gross has argued that one element of the importance of Baumgarten’s philosophy lies in his attention to human beings as “*felix aestheticus*”, which comprises “*felix*” (happy, lucky) and “*aestheticus*” (aesthetic practitioner); “...*felix aestheticus* can be interpreted as the sensible creator and developer of his own world, that is, human culture” (405-406). Baumgarten considered that to be human, in contrast to the rest of the animals, is to be both *res cogitans* and *felix aestheticus*. The former is indispensable for acquisition of logical truth, while the latter is necessary for the acquisition of aesthetic truth.

Furthermore Baumgarten developed his focus on the similarity between human rationality and human sensibility rather than the disjunction between them. In fact, in *Aesthetics*, aesthetics was posited as “the sister of logic” (A §13). This does not mean that Baumgarten ultimately fell into Leibnizian intellectualism. Through a re-configuration of the Leibnizian doctrine of “unity in multiplicity” and acceptance of subjective involvement in aesthetic judgment, the aesthetic realm was detached from the intellectual realm. Nonetheless, not only did Baumgarten pay attention to the difference between logical reasoning and

¹⁸ M §425: “we call OBSERVABLE (phenomena) that which are able to know (confusedly) through the senses.” Also see A §§18-20.

aesthetic appreciation but he also emphasised the analogy between the two. This explicitly results in the introduction of the concept of “analogous reason” in the definition of aesthetics at the outset of his book *Aesthetics*: “Aesthetics (the theory of the liberal arts, the lower study of perception, the art of thinking in the fine style, the art of analogical reasoning) is the science of perception that is acquired by means of the senses” (A §1).¹⁹ That is to say, the key to reading the riddle of rationalism, that is, how the cognitive and ethical value of “confusion” can be vindicated, was sought by Baumgarten by means of the analogy between reason and aesthetic sensibility.

Although there is no detailed explication of the analogue of reason, its definition in *Metaphysics* is as follows: “All of these [inferior cognitive faculties], insofar as they are similar to reason in representing the nexus of things, constitute the analogue of reason...” It is also referred to as “...the collection of the soul’s faculties for representing a nexus confusedly” (M §640). As was argued previously, aesthetic nexus is the inner connection of the particular and the sign derived from the relationship between the sensory power and the object. That is to say, there is a similarity between the intellectual and the sensory inasmuch as both represent nexuses; the former represents them “distinctly” and the latter represents them “confusedly”. In *Aesthetics*, the aesthetic nexus based on the analogy between aesthetic judgment and logical judgment is further explained as “aesthetico-logica” (A §427). “Aesthetico-logica” means the order which permeates the realm of aesthetic representation exclusively; it is neither objective nor subjective, but relational. He conceived that the nexus in the intellectual realm and the nexus in the sensory realm are incompatible; one reveals the necessity of the order in the universe and the other is subservient to contingency in the universe. “Intuition” (*intuitio*) of the nexus in the latter realm is the form of aesthetic cognition.²⁰

Regarding the character of aesthetic cognition, from the second edition of *Metaphysics* onward, Baumgarten added the following explanation: “Consciousness of truth is certitude (subjectivity considered). Sense certitude is persuasion, whereas intellectual certitude is conviction” (M §531).²¹ This is where the ethical scope emerges in Baumgarten’s aesthetics. Logical conviction is necessarily determinable. By contrast, aesthetic persuasiveness lacks such necessity. Due to this absence of necessity, aesthetic perception is conditioned by freedom.

¹⁹ This English translation is cited from *Art in Theory 1648-1815*.

²⁰ With regard to the relationship between intuition and beauty, see A §37.

²¹ See also A §§847-885, §§900-904.

Then, in the second edition, he added another comment saying that freedom is “moral”.²² This observation reflects a point of view that morality appears to us intuitively rather than demonstratively. If we call the most fundamental axiom from which ethical judgements are deduced “the ethical principle”, the principle is not demonstrable but simply and intuitively felt to be correct. This point was admitted even by Descartes who stated that moral certainty is insufficient to be called absolute certainty; it is still within the domain of probability, and in this sense it is still what is perceived “clearly” but “confusedly”. Therefore, in order to vindicate moral certainty, Descartes had to explain the intellectuality of joy via perception of goodness. Leibniz proposed a different solution by identifying the dominance of the single law governing the sensory and the intellectual. However since Baumgarten accepted the pluralities of determiners in forming aesthetic judgment, he was required to propose another explanation in support of the concept of moral certainty.

Therefore Baumgarten observed that human beings can never achieve pure freedom in this phenomenal world. Pure freedom is conceivable but not representable because, as far as the realm of human experience is concerned, its experience depends on bodily existence. Consequently, any experience of freedom may be involved with sensory choice. This acceptance of bodily existence limits a capability of will but on the other hand proves its relationship to the universe, or the whole of the world of objective matter. He said: “...both sensitive and free choice are actualized through the power of the soul for representing the universe according to the position of my body in it” (M §719). Persuasiveness of aesthetic reaction connects to freedom, not purely but sensorily. In this way, morality is connected to both freedom and the universal law in which freedom is limited because of our corporeality. Furthermore, he rephrased the sensate effect of aesthetic judgement, namely, “vividness” as “liveliness” and attributed the persuasiveness of this liveliness to the criteria of aesthetic knowledge (M §531). The aesthetic realm is thus overlaid with the ethical realm as well as the epistemological realm. In §433 of his *Aesthetics*, Baumgarten contended that aesthetic truth requires moral possibility, which is the result of the act of the analogous reason.²³ Reason determines the necessary law while sensory perception

²² M §710: “The faculty of willing or refusing according to one’s own preference is FREEDOM (free choice), cf. §707, 708, 710 (moral freedom, freedom in the unqualified sense).” Also see M §723.

²³ A §433: “Veritas aesthetica requirit possibilitatem in obiectis suis B.) moralem a) latius dictum (...) ut non nisi a libertate derivanda, talia etiam et tanta sint, qualia et quanta ex data libertate, data persona et caractere e.g. hominis certi morali fluere videantur analogo rationis”.

acts analogously with reason (A §74). However not all sensory perception is harmonious in this way. Harmony is only actualised when sensory perception is perfected. At this point, mere “aisthetic” turns into “aesthetic”. In short, beauty is achieved.

Thus, beauty is a key to the synthesis of the cognitive and the ethical in Baumgarten’s aesthetics. He attempted to synthesise truth, morals and beauty within the realm of the sensory representation.²⁴ The sensory realm casts a light on the “contingent truth” (M §119). In virtue of its analogousness, the sensory can act in conformity with the law of reason without necessity but with freedom. He stated: “The purpose of aesthetics is perfection of sensory cognition as it is. However it is beauty” (A §14). Here, “beauty” meant not a description of an object but a description of “perfection” (*perfectio*) of sensory perception. “Perfection” in this case did not mean a description of an object either but a signification of completion. There was a shift from perception of perfection to perfection of perception between *Metaphysics* and *Aesthetics*. The bridge between the realm of “clear-distinct perception” and “clear-confused perception” was destroyed but the process of reason and sensory perception may be seen as acting analogously. Beauty was to be pursued rather than explained. The purpose of aesthetics lay in proposing the accumulation of *a priori* principles of the form of beautiful cognition and the method to obtain it. The technique of such cultivation, namely, a creation of beauty through synthesis of the cognitive and the ethical in “confusion” was called “art” by Baumgarten.

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²⁴ Or may be expressed as “harmonized”. See A §37.

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the genealogical and metaphysical grounds for the positive re-evaluation of the concept of “confusion”, which played a vital role in Baumgarten’s foundation of aesthetics as *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*. First, a reconsideration of Descartes’ and Leibniz’ conceptualisations of “confusion” attempts to identify the place of Baumgarten’s aesthetics within the rationalistic dilemma of evaluating moral and art-related thinking. Secondly, the way in which Baumgarten attempted to resolve the dilemma is explored by a close

examination of his concept of “the aesthetic” and of how the concept changed in the course of his writings. The ultimate purpose of this article lies in illuminating an aspect of Baumgarten’s aesthetics, that is, an attempt to synthesize the cognitive and the ethical by means of a re-configuration of the concept of “confusion”.

Keywords: aesthetics, sensibility, confusion, beauty, cognition

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Schrift erforscht die genealogische und metaphysische Grundlage für die positive Neubewertung des Konzepts der „Verworrenheit“, das eine wichtige Rolle in Baumgartens Konstruktion der Ästhetik als *scientia cognitionis sensitivae* spielte. Zuerst erfolgt eine Neuerwägung von Decartes’ und Leibniz’ Konzeptualisierung der „Verworrenheit“. Dadurch wird versucht, die Position der Ästhetik Baumgartens im rationalistischen Dilemma, das bei der Bewertung des mit Moral und Kunst zusammenhängenden Denkens besteht, zu identifizieren. Dann wird durch eine detaillierte Überprüfung von Baumgartens Begriff des „Ästhetischen“ sowie des Wandels dieses Begriffes im Laufe seiner weiteren Werke erforscht, wie Baumgarten versucht hat, dieses Dilemma zu überwinden. Das eigentliche Ziel dieser Schrift ist es, einen Aspekt von Baumgartens Ästhetik zu veranschaulichen, nämlich den Versuch das Kognitive und das Ethische durch eine Umstrukturierung des Begriffs der „Verworrenheit“ zu vereinigen.

Stichworte: Ästhetik, Sinnlichkeit, Verworrenheit, Schöne, Erkenntnis